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The Use of Postural Aggression in Intimate Partner Relationships: What Is it and Is it Being Recognized as "Abuse" by Intimate Partners

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THE USE OF POSTURAL AGGRESSION IN INTIMATE PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS: WHAT IS IT AND IS IT BEING RECOGNIZED AS "ABUSE" BY INTIMATE PARTNERS

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APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION

We, the faculty supervising the work of Elizabeth Gentry Myers, affirm that the dissertation, *The Use of Postural Aggression in Intimate Partner Relationships: What Is it and Is it Being Recognized as "Abuse" by Intimate Partners,* meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by the Department of Psychology Psy.D. Program and The Graduate College. This work also conforms to the editorial standards of our discipline and the Graduate College of Marshall University. With our signatures, we approve the manuscript for publication.

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ABSTRACT

The use of aggression towards an intimate partner has been an increasingly concerning topic in the violence literature over the last five decades; however, many dimensions continue to lack clarity. Intimate partner violence (IPV) remains the most common form of violence committed against women worldwide with about 30% of women reporting a lifetime prevalence of physical and/or sexual violence by a partner (World Health Organization [WHO], 2019), often accompanied by psychological aggression (Larsen, 2016; Williams et al., 2012). Postural aggression is defined as a subtype of psychological aggression which consists of both direct and indirect forms of non-physical abuse; although, these behaviors do encompass physical undertones (Parrott & Giancola, 2007). The main purpose of this study was to better identify and understand these intimidating behaviors in partner relationships, potentially as a separate construct of psychological IPV. Participants (N = 539) identified frequency of a series of behaviors experienced in current or past romantic relationships, including postural aggression and other forms of psychological abuse, via an online questionnaire on Amazon MTurk. It was hypothesized that postural aggression would align as a distinct form of psychological abuse within the context of IPV. The PCA suggested the presence of three factors explaining 75.62% of total variance. Almost three-fourths of the posturally aggressive items did identify as a single factor, along with items from the two subscales of the MMEA, suggesting a link between these types of aggression. Future research investigating whether this subtype of psychological aggression is significantly distinct as its own separate construct, or if this distinction is the most important focus, is needed. It may also be more valuable to think of psychological aggression as a continuum of behaviors and their relationship as a precursor to more severe modes of partner aggression, thus redirecting the focus to early intervention and prevention of IPV in society.

INTRODUCTION

The use of aggression towards an intimate partner has become an increasingly concerning topic in literature regarding the dynamics of romantic relationships and domestic violence for the last five decades, as well as being recognized as an "urgent public health crisis" (Chesworth, 2018, p.76). Intimate partner violence (IPV) remains the most common form of violence committed against women worldwide as about 30% of women who have reported ever having been in an intimate partnership also report having experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence by her partner (WHO, 2019). An even greater number report psychological aggression: almost half of women surveyed in the United States have experienced this form of aggression (Breiding et al., 2014; Dokkedahl et al., 2019), and it is thought to be the most common, and often most underreported, form of IPV (Dokkedahl et al., 2019). While psychological aggression often occurs alongside physical or sexual abuse (Larsen, 2016; Williams et al., 2012), it clearly constitutes a distinct form of abuse and can occur independently of other types of violence further expanding the dynamics of IPV implementation and victimization.

WHAT IS INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE?

In general, intimate partner violence (IPV) is commonly defined as "actual or threatened physical, sexual, psychological, or stalking violence by current or former intimate partners" that can be committed by either member of the relationship (Thompson et al., 2006, p.1). This pervasive form of domestic violence not only affects individuals involved in the intimate partnership (both victims and perpetrators) but also families, community networks, and society as a whole (Chesworth, 2018; Lanier & Maume, 2009). Over ten million women and men are assaulted in the United States by an intimate partner each year, and this abuse can take on many

different forms or occur concurrently (Chesworth, 2018). Sexual abuse of a partner can include but is not limited to sexual coercion, forced intercourse, or unwanted sexual touch. Physical violence, which is the mostly widely recognized form of partner abuse, often includes slapping, hitting, kicking, pinning down, and/or pushing, which is almost always accompanied by some form of psychological or emotional aggression, such as coercion, intimidation, humiliation, or degradation (Larsen, 2016). Since psychological or emotional abuse is reported as the most common and most underreported form of IPV, it, as well as its subtypes, will be the primary area of focus in this study.

Psychological aggression is most readily defined as "the use of verbal and non-verbal communication with the intent to: a) harm another person mentally or emotionally and/or b) exert control over another person" (Breiding et al., 2015, p.15). This form of abuse is often subject to misinterpretation as its effects on the victim can sometimes be invisible to friends, family, and community networks due to a lack of physical indicators (Rogers & Follingstad, 2014; Williams et al., 2012); however, victims of this form of abuse have reported a greater negative impact than when experiencing physical abuse (Williams et al., 2012). More specifically, among those who have experienced both physical and psychological partner violence, psychological aggression is often associated with greater long-term mental and physical health deficits when controlling for the immediate physical injury from physical abuse (Taft et al., 2006). One study found that women who experience physical IPV often have a higher likelihood of obtaining a clinical diagnosis, such as depression, anxiety, or PTSD, but those who experience psychological (or emotional) abuse actually identify with more overall symptoms (Rogers & Follingstad, 2014). Additionally, even when partners recognize psychologically aggressive behaviors in a relationship as well as increased overall stress, they do

not always identify their relationship as a potential cause of this increase in stress, particularly when they consider themselves "committed" to the relationship (Arriaga & Schkeryantz, 2015). In conjunction with the lack of physical indicators and overall under-recognition, psychological aggression also has several dimensions, further complicating its understanding by victims and researchers alike.

Murphy & Hoover (1999) created a measure to best encompass four main subtypes of psychological aggression that are utilized in intimate partnerships. They also related how these different subtypes of emotional abuse occur in conjunction with physical abuse in a relationship. First, they defined dominance/intimidation as the use of threatening behaviors such as yelling, intense verbal arguments, and destruction of property used to scare or imply harm in one's partner. This form of psychological aggression correlates most to the use of physical abuse (Murphy & Hoover, 1999). Next, the term denigration describes behaviors such as name-calling, humiliation, or making degrading statements to deflate a partner's sense of self-worth. Individuals who engage in such behaviors are often considered vindictive, and this subtype has a moderate to high correlation with physical abuse as well, indicating that these types of behaviors likely occur alongside physical abuse in a relationships (Murphy & Hoover, 1999). A third subtype of emotional abuse, labeled restrictive engulfment, encompasses tracking behaviors such as following a partner, checking up on a partner's whereabouts, and attempts to restrict one's involvement with others. This form of abuse implies a great deal of jealousy and mistrust of one's partner and is considered somewhat independent of physical abuse (Murphy & Hoover, 1999). Finally, hostile withdrawal incorporates a withholding of emotional and/or physical affection from a partner in a cold or punitive nature. This may include refusal to discuss a problem, lack of emotional expression, or withdrawal of physical intimacy.

Overall, hostile withdrawal was considered to be the most frequent (Follingstad & Rogers, 2014; Williams et al., 2012) type of emotional abuse exhibited in intimate partnerships, particularly in young couples in which this type of behavior tends to be more consistently used across the relationship and bidirectionally by both partners (Lawrence et al., 2009). Also, hostile withdrawal is considered the most unrelated to physical abuse due to the avoidant nature of these behaviors (Murphy & Hoover, 1999). Hostile withdrawal and denigration are most likely to worsen overall mental health long-term compared to the other two subtypes of emotional abuse (Lawrence et al., 2009), implying that even some forms of psychological aggression may be perceived as more harmful to victims than others. An additional subtype of psychologically abusive behaviors, which encompasses physical undertones but does not reach the extent of physical assault, also exists. These behaviors, which may overlap with Murphy & Hoover's (1999) definition of the dominance/intimidation factor, imply the potential for physical harm or threat to one's partner, often involve intimidation without physical contact, and have been termed "postural aggression" (Cook & Parrott, 2009), which will be the primary area of focus in this study.

POSTURAL AGGRESSION

While all acts of violence are considered "aggressive," not all acts of aggression, particularly psychological aggression, are physically violent in nature (Cook & Parrott, 2009). Further, some types of psychological or emotional IPV may be considered "aggressive" but not be recognized as abuse by victims, further indicating a need for clarification of different variations of psychological abuse. Postural aggression is defined as a subtype of psychological aggression which consists of both direct and indirect forms of non-physical abuse; although, these behaviors do encompass physical undertones (Parrott & Giancola, 2007). What

distinguishes these behaviors from emotional abuse is the use of some active yet nonverbal physicality (i.e., using one's body or surroundings) to communicate harm that is not quite characterized as physical abuse, but is still intimidating and harmful to the recipient (Cook & Parrott, 2009). Behaviors could be expressed by an individual driving dangerously with his or her partner in the car in an attempt to scare the partner or hovering over a partner during an argument. Additionally, using one's body in any way to block a partner from exiting a room during a disagreement or conflict would also be an example of postural aggression. All of these behaviors require the abusive partner to engage in some form of physical action that does not reach the form of overt physical abuse or require the abuser to come into physical contact with the partner.

When it is actually being recognized as "abuse," experiencing this form of aggression has sometimes been described as more detrimental to overall health and well-being than other forms of IPV, according to the victims who have experienced such acts (Lawrence, 2009). An additional problem arises when this form of victimization is not recognized or identified as abusive compared to other forms of aggression, despite often occurring concurrently. Postural aggression is harmful for victims of IPV, and because of its under-identification and nonrecognition as abuse reducing the likelihood of help-seeking, it may also contribute to more negative long-term effects on one's well-being (Williams et al., 2012). In addition, male perpetrators also exhibit a tendency to under-report their own use of violence, particularly physical violence, against female partners (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003), which may imply an underreporting theme in non-physical, less severe forms of partner aggression as well, which only further complicates female victims' under-recognition and lack of reporting of this form of abuse.

Despite the recognition of postural aggression as "detrimental" (Williams et al., 2012), it is not uncommon for medical providers and bystanders alike to characterize physical abuse as more damaging or harmful to an individual than psychological or postural aggression. Although physical violence is more often recognizable due to risk of overt physical injury, the occurrence of more covert means of control are often underreported and unrecognized, particularly by healthcare providers. Women who have experienced psychological abuse at the hands of an intimate partner often present for services in the healthcare setting; however, because of a lack of obvious physical (or even outward emotional) markers of trauma, this form of violence is often missed by the outside world (Campbell, 2002). Women more often present with somatic concerns including PTSD-related symptoms (Miller & McCaw, 2019) as a result of chronic psychological aggression, deemed unrelated to IPV, which may be misdiagnosed as depression or anxiety (Campbell, 2002). Treating symptoms of anxiety and depression, which are often associated with IPV victimization (Miller & McCaw, 2019), without asking about or addressing the experience of partner aggression may be further contributing to the invisibility of such acts of psychological abuse. Variations of IPV, including psychological aggression, across different cultural dimensions also influences the ways in which acts of partner violence are recognized and characterized across societies.

VARIATIONS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE ACROSS SEXES

All forms of relationship violence occur across and within all cultures, including in both heterosexual and same-sex partnerships (Breiding et al., 2008); however, the dynamics of how, why, and when these forms of violence tend to occur vary greatly (Vandello & Cohen, 2003). Much of the research on differences in experience of IPV examines sex differences. Overall, men experience more physically violent acts, by both strangers and companions, each year compared

to women; however, when looking specifically at partner relationships, females are eight times more likely to be the victim of intimate partner violence than men (McFarlane et al., 2000). The United States continues to have the highest rate of female homicides as a result of IPV of any industrialized country in the world (Kelly, 2011), with women being six times more likely to be murdered by an intimate partner than men despite men being more likely to be involved in interpersonal violence in general (Stöckl et al., 2013). Incidents of IPV towards women, including partner homicide, only increase when considering sexual, racial, and ethnic minorities (Black et al., 2011) as well as women in poor and underserved communities who experience higher rates of IPV than their more economically fortunate counterparts (Campbell, 2002).

Nevertheless, recent research has suggested intimate partner violence is perpetrated by both men and women, with women often engaging in aggressive acts at a similar or greater frequency than men (Archer, 2000; Swan & Snow, 2006); however, the lifetime prevalence of experiencing IPV continues to be higher for women. Currently, one in four women (Gilroy et al., 2020; Miller & McCaw, 2019) and one in 10 men experience IPV at some point in their life (Miller & McCaw, 2019). Women also experience greater victimization of severe physical violence with the potential for physical injury and multiple forms of abuse than men (Black et al., 2011). Although these patterns may exist, the research remains inconclusive surrounding the extent of IPV utilized by women due to the fact that physical violence perpetrated by men against women results in greater physical injury than that inflicted by women in an intimate relationship (Archer, 2000). Because females do tend to experience a broader range of acts of violence and are more likely to sustain physical harm, consideration of violence directed toward women specifically is warranted and will be the primary sample population in this study. Along

with the variations in types and implementation of IPV, there are also differing explanations as to why one remains involved in a romantic relationship when such violent acts occur.

WHY DOES ONE STAY IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP?

One of the most difficult characteristics of partner aggression to understand is the motivation for one to stay in the relationship once physical violence, or even psychological aggression, has occurred. This phenomenon often troubles both helping professionals and the general public (Kelly et al., 2011). Although it is important to examine theoretical explanations for violent behavior, it is also essential to assess victims' expressed reasons for staying in violent and/or aggressive relationships. Historically, researchers have sought to offer psychological or pathological explanations for "choosing" to stay in an abusive relationship, including low self-esteem, experiencing symptoms of a variety of mental health disorders, learned helplessness, traumatic bonding, or a perpetual cycle of family violence (Kelly et al., 2011).

However, many of these explanations are inconsistently supported by research (Kelly et al., 2011). For example, in some cases, it is difficult to determine whether reported low self-esteem appears to be a reaction to the experience of IPV or a predisposing factor. In fact, some research has supported the finding that women with moderate to high levels of self-esteem are just as likely to become involved in an abusive relationship as women who identify as having low self-esteem or self-worth (Kelly et al., 2011). In turn, it has been easier for the public to relate a woman's reason for staying in an abusive relationship to individual factors possessed by the woman rather than larger, societal factors that may be coming into play, such as a greater acceptance of violence against women by men (Carlson & Jones, 2010; Walker, 1979) or socioeconomic factors limiting economic independence (Gilroy et al., 2020). Women also express shame, fear of consequences, or a fear of poverty upon leaving an abusive relationship.

Often, victims of psychological aggression may be subject to economic or financial abuse in which the abusive partner controls all financial decisions, leaving the victimized partner helpless, lacking financial knowledge, and sometimes in a state of poverty upon leaving the relationship (Gilroy et al., 2020; Miller & McCaw, 2019).

Additionally, there is an overwhelming under-recognition of less overt forms of psychological aggression (Kelly et al., 2011) as abuse. It is also common for a woman to report staying in a non-physically violent, but still significantly abusive relationship, because "he didn't hit her" or did not engage in other overt physical actions (Lanier & Maume, 2009). Due to a tendency to perceive psychological aggression as less severe than physical aggression, many women may fail to recognize psychological abuse, particularly postural aggression, as abusive due to the simple fact that it did not result in a physical injury (Capezza & Arriaga, 2008). The long-lasting negative consequences of non-physical violence often go undetected (Arriaga & Schkeryantz, 2015). Williams and colleagues (2012) showed that identification is only one aspect of this form of victimization. They examined the discrepancies among victims', aggressors', and bystanders' perception of acts of violence in terms of severity, and their results were contradictory. Whereas aggressors and bystanders often saw the effects of physical aggression as being more violent or harmful, the victims of both physical and psychological abuse agreed that the effects of psychologically aggressive tactics were much more long-lasting and detrimental to their overall health (Williams et al., 2012). So, if psychological aggression, and likely postural aggression, are identified by victims as resulting in more long-lasting psychological damage than overt physical abuse, why is physical violence still considered more detrimental by the larger society?

The acceptance of postural aggression, in comparison to physical abuse, in intimate partnerships is still present and may be a contributing factor as to why women delay, if ever, terminating abusive partnerships. The dynamics of and impact that other, non-physical forms of aggression may have on an intimate partner is an area in need of further exploration, particularly in communities for which IPV is more common. The current available literature offers a variety of explanations as to why IPV, including psychological aggression, continues to occur at such alarming rates.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS

There is quite a discrepancy amongst the many theoretical explanations of IPV, which makes it difficult for researchers and clinicians alike to capture a complete understanding of how or why IPV occurs in a particular relationship or setting and how to treat the longstanding effects of such acts. Perhaps the best-known explanation for IPV is that which derived from feminist ideology. Similar to another well-known model of aggression, The Duluth Model, which emphasizes the use of control or force to gain power over another individual, the feminist perspective of IPV emerged in the 1970s following an increase in awareness of relationship abuse among married couples (Carlson & Jones, 2010). This explanation is rooted in the understanding that patriarchal standards placed on individuals by the larger society suggest a widely held acceptance of violence against women throughout such a culture (Bell & Naugle, 2008; Kelly et al., 2011), which results in societal oppression of women (Chesworth, 2018) and other social minorities. According to this stance, IPV occurs because of a man's socially ingrained hostility towards women (Love et al., 2020) and a desire to exert control and power to dominate his female partner (Carlson & Jones, 2010; Chesworth, 2018; Corvo, 2019; Walker, 1979). Some models even go as far to suggest that IPV not only occurs as a result of patriarchal

values but also more often in the context of honor-based cultures in which these patriarchal standards are more institutionalized. In such cultures, it is the man's right or "duty" to uphold honor within the family when a woman has shown disrespect towards the male head of the household, thus justifying the use of violence against women in the home to maintain order and compliance (Vandello & Cohen, 2003).

In comparison, resource-focused models suggest that men are more likely to commit violent acts against a female partner when financial and/or economic resources are scarce (resource theory) or when the female partner's incoming resources or support are perceived as more than his (relative resource theory), which is consistent with a gendered ideology that men have a desire to be primary providers within a household (Atkinson & Greenstein, 2005). When men do not achieve such a status within the intimate relationship, IPV is likely to occur, according to resource theory (Atkinson & Greenstein, 2005). Although this explanation of IPV as a social construct resulting from patriarchal standards is widely understood and cited throughout the literature, as well as utilized in batterer treatment programs, other conceptualizations of IPV have arisen in the last few decades.

A family violence perspective would suggest that IPV does not occur because of any ingrained ideals about masculinity or femininity but is more situational and arises within both male and female partners, as a direct result of some form of escalation during a common disagreement or conflict within the home (Carlson & Jones, 2010). This theory assumes that much of the reported violence between couples has simply escalated from a less violent altercation, which occasionally spirals into physical violence (Carlson & Jones, 2010). This explanation addresses the "escalation process" of IPV, which is often an understudied aspect of

partner aggression, much like postural aggression, which likely occurs most often during this escalation phase of conflict (Cook & Parrott, 2009).

Similarly, social learning theory expands upon the family violence model to further suggest that partner violence is just as likely to occur at the hand of both male and female perpetrators because of a modeled portrayal of how familial or interpersonal conflict should be handled in the home, as a result of witnessing violent acts of aggression as a child (Bell & Naugle, 2008). Through an intergenerational transmission of norms about the appropriateness of such acts of violence and the use of familial aggression, individuals will "practice what they see" when involved in similar dynamics in adulthood (Corvo, 2019). This model suggests that children, both male and female, have developed a "tolerance or acceptance of violence within the family" (Bell & Naugle, 2008, p. 1098), which has been modeled by caregivers or other family members in the home. The vulnerability that children are left with after experiencing abuse, especially more than one dimension of abuse, or witnessing domestic violence by caregivers can also lead to revictimization in adulthood (Seedat et al., 2005). This revictimization often occurs in the form of intimate partner violence (DiLillo et al., 2001).

In terms of perpetration as a result of early childhood victimization, or revictimization in adulthood, it has been suggested that the use of hostility and anger tend to remain consistent over time with only the delivery of aggression changing from overt to more covert means of intimidation across the lifespan. In other words, if a child exhibits high levels of hostility or anger in childhood, they may also be more susceptible to exhibiting such in adulthood, but his or her means of displaying that hostility may adapt. Similarly, sex differences have been found among early interpersonal relations (outside of the romantic sector) between (and among) males and females in childhood. Côté (2007) found that even in elementary years, females tend to use

more indirect or covert forms of aggression, including social manipulation and degradation, against others at higher rates than males, while males tend to resort to acts of physical aggression. When looking at these interpersonal patterns in adulthood, more specifically in romantic relationships, these covert acts of aggression may present as interrupting one's partner, constant judgment or criticism, or limiting partner's opportunities to express his or herself (Björkqvist et al., 1994), while physical aggression may exhibit as hitting, kicking, pushing, or slapping.

Consistent with these family violence and social learning models, others have suggested that nearly all partners experience violent impulses to act aggressively towards a partner during a disagreement at some point over the course of the relationship while only a smaller percentage actually commit acts of violence during an altercation (Finkel, 2007). Proponents of an Impelling/Inhibiting Model of IPV suggest that individuals will only commit acts of intimate partner violence when the violence-inhibiting factors, those variables which deter an individual from using violence, succumb to one's violence-impelling factors, those variables within the individual that generate a greater vulnerability for committing violent acts (Finkel, 2007). Each factor is characterized by four dimensions, or vulnerabilities, which are likely to strengthen or weaken each factor. In addition, further strengthening or perpetuating one's violence-impelling factors (i.e., witnessing IPV as a child) may lead to an increase in the severity of IPV (Finkel, 2007). All in all, if one's violence-impelling factors outweigh his or her violence-inhibiting factors at the time of an argument and one cannot reasonably gain necessary supports, he or she will commit a violent act of aggression towards a partner, according to this model (Finkel, 2007).

Finally, perhaps the most comprehensive theoretical explanation of why and how IPV occurs implements an integration of several models previously discussed into a truly integrative

explanation of partner violence. "Human behavior is complex, and thus, there is no single solution when it comes to the etiology and treatment of any particular social problem" (Chesworth, 2018, p. 90); however, a model which incorporates the neurobiological impact of trauma, individual factors, societal influences, and genetic predispositions into an ecological model of risk for IPV may be a good start. Chesworth (2018) integrates Bronfenbrenner's Nested Ecological Model and Belsky's Ecological Model of Child Maltreatment to create a combined risk model for IPV which implements correlates of IPV perpetration across multiple domains. By examining characteristics across one's personal sphere (i.e., genetic makeup, physiological brain changes due to early childhood trauma, etc.), microsphere (i.e., family dynamics, early attachment patterns to caregivers, exposure to IPV or abuse in childhood, etc.), mesosphere (i.e., community involvement, neighborhood violence or dysfunction, poverty, etc.), and macrosphere (i.e., sociocultural patriarchy, systematic oppression, and overall acceptance of violence), Chesworth (2018) is able to account for many different historical explanations for IPV developed over the last half-century without limiting one's understanding to one theoretical explanation. Implementing such a model may lead to an increased understanding of types of IPV perpetrators and how different forms of IPV continue to persist.

TYPES OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND PERPETRATORS

Perhaps much of the inconsistency between the family violence and feminist theory perspectives arises from the fact that these ideologies are addressing distinct forms of partner violence (Johnson, 1995). Further clarifying the acts of violence in intimate partner relationships may better explain what these behaviors actually look like. Johnson (1995, 2006, 2011) divided intimate partner violence into four broad categories. First, he termed situational or common couple violence as that which occurs when ordinary conflict escalates into a violent act of

aggression, rooted in the family violence perspective. Common couple violence is not premeditated but rather comes from a place of imperfect conflict resolution and de-escalation strategies. This form of IPV is mutually escalating, and can occur on behalf of either partner, at comparable rates (Love et al., 2020).

Next, intimate or patriarchal terrorism, which more heavily aligns with the feminist perspective of IPV, describes a type of violence that is rooted in the male partner's attempts to establish control or dominance in the relationship (Love et al., 2020). The terroristic aspect of this form of IPV indicates that physical violence may be used in conjunction with other non-physical forms of psychological aggression, such as intimidation and coercion (Johnson, 1995, 2006, 2011) and is often premeditated as a means of exerting control over another (Chesworth, 2018). These precipitated means of control tactics may include threats of physical harm, control of finances or use of allowances, threatening the well-being of other family members (particularly children), multiple dimensions of emotional abuse, or sexual coercion (Johnson, 2006). Intimate terrorism is most likely to escalate as the relationship progresses and when perception of control, by the male partner, is threatened (Carlson & Jones, 2010). It is also less likely to occur when children are in the home (Slep et al., 2015).

Johnson (2006) also describes a third form of violence, most commonly used by women, that is reactive to intimate terrorism on behalf of the original recipient of IPV. This form of aggression, violence resistance, is an attempt to combat physical violence as a means of self-defense against the perpetrator (Hines & Douglas, 2018; Johnson, 2011). Individuals who utilize violence resistance strategies are often only physically aggressive during times of self-defense and do not utilize physical aggression elsewhere (Johnson, 2011).

A final dimension of Johnson's identification of violent subtypes within IPV includes mutual violent control, a form of partner aggression in which both partners equally use intimate terrorism tactics in a battle for control or domination within the relationship (Hines & Douglas, 2018). Less is known about this reciprocal form of abuse other than the fact that it is occurring at the hands of both male and female partners in intimate relationships (Chesworth, 2018). These forms of couple violence differ in frequency of use of physical aggression, use of controlling behaviors, and fear of injury by the victim, with intimate terrorism rating higher across all three factors (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003). In conclusion, Johnson's typologies of IPV do not offer much insight into an abuser's individual pathology, or those identifiable personality features, as an explanation for violent behavior, which will be further explored.

When examining specific personality features of those who become violent towards a partner, three main subtypes of perpetrators arise. One form of perpetrator is accustomed to the use of violence and control tactics, including manipulation, within the relationship as well as in his or her daily life outside of the partnership. These individuals may not always express a lack of remorse for violent behavior (Fowler & Westen, 2011). This type of individual has likely used instrumental violence, or that which is used to obtain some form of gain, both in the relationship (Bushman & Anderson, 2001) and in his or her daily life (Fowler & Westen, 2011). These individuals have been described as more psychopathic than abusers previously discussed, often engaging in other acts of delinquency or particularly violent behaviors across the lifespan (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994).

In comparison, another form of intimate abuser can be categorized by the hostile or controlling subtype. These individuals are characterized by strong emotional reactivity, internalized negative emotions, prevalence of anger and hostility, and a tendency to hold grudges

against a partner (Fowler & Westen, 2011). Someone in this group may easily interpret minor jokes or insults as personal attacks, resulting in a hostile response style. These individuals may also externalize blame onto their partners, rather than accept responsibility for violent or inappropriate actions (Fowler & Westen, 2011). Those partners, whose personalities or affect were primarily described as angry, hostile, or negative, were associated with moderate to severe forms of IPV perpetration (Birkley & Eckhardt, 2015).

The third type of violent partner, who is characterized by the borderline or dependent subtype, may exhibit a presence of predominately negative emotionality, emotional dysregulation, impulsivity, and negative core beliefs about him or herself, often encompassing low self-worth or a sense of incompetence (Fowler & Westen, 2011). These individuals may also externalize blame onto their partners, but this more often occurs because of a tendency to feel victimized or misunderstood by the partner rather than a distrust or perceived threat (Fowler & Westen, 2011). Individuals diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) may exhibit characteristics of this subtype resulting from insecure attachment in childhood and a characterization of instability and insecurity. These individuals present with a higher risk for being both a perpetrator and a victim of IPV in adolescence and adulthood (Chesworth, 2018).

Finally, one of the more recognizable models of IPV offenders has resulted from Gottman et al.'s (1995) discrimination between what he termed "pitbulls" and "cobras" (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998, p. 28-30). These distinct subtypes are characterized by the use of violent behaviors in response to physiological identifiers whilst engaging in interpersonal conflict. Those identified as cobras (or Type I batterers) are those who are more likely to have engaged in other violent acts, outside of the intimate relationship, while also perpetrating higher rates of psychological or verbal abuse, in conjunction with physical violence within the

partnership (Carlson & Jones, 2010). These individuals are considered more dangerous because of the intensity of violent acts committed and are noteworthy due to decreased physiological arousal during conflict (Gottman et al., 1995). This decreased arousal may indicate a more deliberate form of violence and, inevitably, more planned actions of violence against one's partner. These types of batterers have been described as calculating and predatory (Chesworth, 2018).

In comparison, those identified as pitbulls (or Type II batterers) exhibit much lower rates of physical violence within the intimate relationship. These individuals become more emotional and aroused when engaging in verbally aggressive behavior, possibly suggesting a tendency to escalate an argument or disagreement (Carlson & Jones, 2010). These individuals may often exhibit more remorse or feel apologetic towards a partner after a violent action has occurred. They are often described as impulsive, reactive, and emotional (Chesworth, 2018).

Despite having been extensively researched since the early 1970s, the dynamics of IPV are ever-changing and growing in complexity (Lanier & Maume, 2009). As more laws are implemented to protect victims of partner violence and prosecute those who commit violent partner aggression, there continues to be a need for a more defined identification and understanding of such acts. Although most forms of physical aggression (as well as sexual aggression) are easily differentiated from emotional or psychological abuse, a subset of psychologically aggressive but physically intimidating behaviors experienced in intimate partner relationships is more difficult to classify. While much has been discovered and better understood around IPV, there remain areas of partner violence which need to be further explored, such as postural aggression in intimate partnerships. Although the use of physical aggression in intimate partner relationships is well documented in the IPV literature and is what much of the typologies

focus on, there are other, non-physical acts that are a bit more complex. Many theories and typologies of batterers describe the use of psychological aggression and a more vindictive, coercive, or manipulative perpetrator, often utilizing non-physical, intimidating means of IPV. These forms of psychological partner aggression, such as postural aggression, are less defined and underrecognized, which is the primary focus of this study.

THE PROBLEM

There continues to be a variety of ways to define and characterize psychological aggression in IPV research, particularly subtypes of psychological aggression that appear to be more dynamic in nature. In addition, there is no universally agreed upon definition of what is or is not considered postural aggression in intimate partner relationships; although, we know that it is occurring at alarming rates alongside other, more physical forms of IPV. Because the term *postural* is more commonly used when examining non-intimate social or relational aggression, such as research examining cross-race discrimination and microaggressions (Parrott & Giancola, 2007), very little research has focused on how this form of aggression differs from other forms of psychological abuse in intimate partner relationships. When this subtype of psychological aggression is included in measures of psychological abuse, many items used to measure this form of aggression are often used comparatively in both physical and emotional measures of IPV (Cook & Parrott, 2009). It is difficult, if not impossible, to measure such a phenomenon when the defining characteristics cannot always be agreed upon in the literature.

Secondly, there are no established measures in the literature that solely measure postural aggression. They are often lumped together with general forms of emotional or psychological abuse, and sometimes ignored completely. There is also a lack of agreement amongst researchers on what distinguishes postural aggression from other, non-physical forms of abuse. Additionally,

along with any other form of abuse, it is often challenging to measure the varying effects that this form of aggression is having on a victim. A study by Williams et al. (2012) partially recognizes this problem of identification by stating that the invisibility of this form of abuse to the outside population, along with IPV as a whole (Lanier & Maume, 2009), is what keeps victims not only from reporting this form of abuse but also from even recognizing it as abuse in the first place. Finally, there may be a path from postural aggression to more intense, violent acts of abuse, as it is widely understood that psychological aggression almost always accompanies more severe acts of violence against a partner (Larsen, 2016; Williams et al., 2012). Psychological and physical abuse often occur together, so it is possible that postural aggression may be a precipitating factor for different types of more physically damaging forms of abuse.

CURRENT STUDY

The main purpose of this study was to better identify and understand non-physically aggressive but intimidating behaviors, labeled postural aggression, in intimate partner relationships. Bringing to light this often overlooked and understudied form of psychological aggression (Lanier & Maume, 2009; Williams et al., 2012) will only further eliminate the invisibility of IPV, in comparison to other forms of violence. This study compared items from an established measure of emotional abuse with predetermined posturally aggressive items (identified from other measures of psychological aggression) to determine if postural aggression functions as a separate dimension of abuse compared to other aspects of overall psychological abuse. In other words, items depicting behaviors deemed as "posturally aggressive" were compared to already established items of emotional or psychological abuse to determine if postural aggression indeed contains statistically different components and should be studied as a separate construct. The following hypothesis was proposed: Postural aggression will align as

distinct from other forms of psychological or emotional abuse within the context of intimate partner relationships.

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were 539 females of at least eighteen years of age (M = 34.84, SD = 10.89) recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Most of the participants in this study were in the 25-34 age range (41.8%). Compared to the national average of females, this age range is also the largest overall in the United States, aside from those aged 65 years and older (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.-b). The majority of respondents identified as White or European American (68%), which is representative of the overall race distribution in the United States. According to the most recent estimates, about 76% of the U.S. identifies as White followed by Black or African American (about 13%), which is also consistent with the participants of this study (13%; U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.-a). See Appendix C for complete age and race distributions in this sample. Sexual orientations also varied amongst straight or heterosexual (78%), bisexual (18%), lesbian (3%), gay (1%), queer (1%), and questioning (0.2%) participants. About 41% of respondents were living in urban areas, while the remainder resided in either suburban (39%) or rural areas (21%). Over half of the respondents had obtained a bachelor's degree (57%) with the remaining participants having acquired master's degrees (17%), some college education with no obtained degree (11%), associate degrees (9%), high school diplomas (5%), and doctoral degrees (1%). About 79% of individuals were currently in a romantic relationship. The average number of lifetime romantic partnerships experienced in this sample was 4.01 (SD = 5.26) with 71% of women having experienced at least one act of intimate partner violence in her life. See Appendix C for complete distributions.

MEASURES

Demographics. A questionnaire consisting of several demographic identifiers was presented to respondents first. Those who chose to participate were asked to provide information regarding age, race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, highest level of educational attainment, current relationship status (i.e., single, married, divorced, etc.), and geographical location. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) categorizes areas into three geographical groups: central city, outside central city, and nonmetropolitan area. Consistent with previous research examining these constructs, the terms urban, suburban, and rural (Duhart, 2000) were used to identify geographical identification in this study, respectively. Participants were also asked to indicate how many relationships they have been in throughout their lifetime, if they have been exposed to intimate partner violence in said relationships, and whether they had experienced any barriers to accessing care or resources as a result of experiencing intimate partner violence. See Appendix H for the demographic questionnaire in its entirety.

Psychological and Emotional Abuse. *The Multidimensional Measure of Emotional Abuse (MMEA)*, developed by Murphy and Hoover (1999; see Appendix I), is a 27-item survey developed to measure the following dimensions of emotional abuse: restrictive engulfment, hostile withdrawal, denigration, and dominance or intimidation. Sample items ask about behaviors such as searching through a partner's belongings, trying to make a partner feel guilty, and hovering over a partner during a disagreement. For this study, this scale was altered (from a numerical frequency scale) to better assess general frequency rather than specific instances of abusive occurrences. The original scale offered the following response choices: once, twice, 3-5 times, 6-10 times, 11-20 times, never in the past 6 months but this has happened before, and this has never happened. These items were changed to a 5-point scale to assess general frequency of

behaviors (0 = Never, 1 = Rarely, 2 = Occasionally, 3 = Frequently, and 4 = Very Frequently). In addition, one item, which was thought to be measuring two separate aspects of a behavior was separated into two individual items to aid in clarification of specific behaviors, creating a 28-item measure. One item ("said or implied the other person was stupid") was deleted in error during the survey distribution process and was not included in data analysis. Previous studies have shown varying levels of internal consistency for the different subscales of this measure: restrictive engulfment (Cronbach's α = .85), hostile withdrawal (Cronbach's α =.91), denigration (Cronbach's α = .92), and dominance/intimidation (Cronbach's α = .91; Murphy & Hoover, 1999; Thompson et al., 2006). In addition, the phrase, "the other person," was changed to "you" throughout the items to aid in better clarity for participants. The original scale also asked the participant to indicate how many times they had experienced each behavior as both a victim and a perpetrator; however, participants were only asked about their experiences as a victim for the purposes of this study.

Postural Aggression. In addition to the 28-item scale, 13 supplementary items (See Appendix J) were added from other previously established measures of emotional or psychological abuse (Thompson et al., 2006) and used to help identify postural aggression in intimate partnerships. Many of the items have been discussed in prior research as emotional or psychological abuse but appear to have a physical component to the delivery of such behaviors. Sample items inquire about behaviors such as locking a partner in the bedroom, destroying something belonging to a partner, hitting a wall in front of a partner, intentionally leaving a firearm somewhere to be found by partner, and making a "slit your throat" motion across his or her throat to imply harm. Items were rated on the same 5-point scale as *The Multidimensional Measure of Emotional Abuse (MMEA)* assessing general frequency of behaviors. When

combined with items from the *MMEA* which were also considered to be posturally aggressive (9 items), a total of 22 items were determined as describing the concept of postural aggression for this study. See Appendix K for full list of postural aggression items.

PROCEDURE

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board at Marshall University, participants were identified through an advertisement listing placed with Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), a web service provided by Amazon.com that allows researchers, businesses, and others to provide human intelligence tasks (HITs) to individuals by paying them to electronically participate in surveys and other forms of data collection (Rouse, 2015). This method of data collection has become increasingly popular within academia because of the expedited data collection process and accessibility of questionnaires to consumers (Holden et al., 2013). The use of MTurk has also allowed for greater variety in sample characteristics while providing high-quality data at a cost-effective rate (Buhrmester et al., 2011; Holden et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2017). MTurk data collection has allowed for more demographically diverse samples, in comparison to undergraduate convenience samples, particularly in terms of geographical origin and racial background (Buhrmester et al., 2018). Interested individuals were provided a link to Qualtrics, an approved online survey distributing software, which hosted the survey. All participants read an informed consent document before completing the survey. Completion of questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes. In addition, participants were offered $1.00 each for participation in this study.

RESULTS

PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS ANALYSIS

The 41 items measuring psychological and emotional abuse, including those identified beforehand as depicting postural aggression, were subjected to a principal components analysis (PCA) to evaluate whether postural aggression items would identify as distinct from other non-physical abusive behaviors. Prior to performing the PCA, the suitability of the data set for performing a factor analysis was assessed. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .99, exceeding the recommended value of .60 (Kaiser 1970, 1974), and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant (p = .000), indicating the appropriateness of a factor analysis given the provided dataset. The PCA suggested the presence of three components or factors with eigenvalues exceeding 1.0, which explained 68.5%, 4.7%, and 2.5% of total variance, respectively. Inspection of the Scree Plot revealed a clear break after the first component with a smaller break after the second component, indicating the possibility of a third factor. See Figure 1 for Scree Plot.

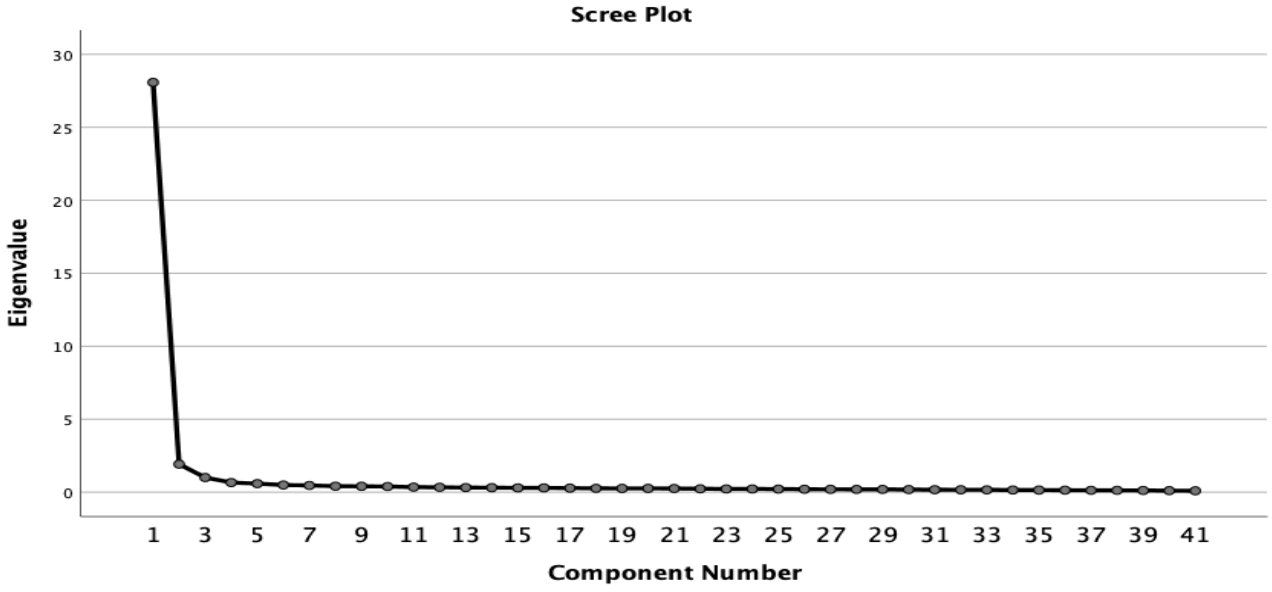

Figure 1: Scree Plot from Principal Components Analysis

A three-component solution explained 75.62% of the total variance in the sample. See Appendix D for further breakdown of each item's variance which can be explained by the three factors. To aid in the interpretation of these three factors, an oblimin rotation was performed, which revealed the presence of 22, 11, and 8 items loading onto three different factors, respectively, further validating the justification for a third factor (See Appendix E). Consistent with prior research showing moderate-to-high internal consistency between items from previously established subscales (i.e., restrictive engulfment, hostile withdrawal, denigration, and dominance/intimidation) of *The Multidimensional Measure of Emotional Abuse* (MMEA; Thompson et al., 2006), many items depicting insulting, dominating, and intimating behaviors factored together; however, many also loaded well with the postural aggression items. See Appendix F for items' individual loadings across all three factors.

Component 1 consisted of all items of the previously established "denigration" subscale (6 items), all items from the "dominance/intimidation" subscale (5 items) with the exception of two items, and 11 of the 13 items from the added posturally aggressive questions. When examining all previously identified posturally aggressive items, all but six items factored onto Component 1. See Appendix G for full breakdown of factor loadings for postural items. This multifactorial model consisting of only three components was inconsistent with previous research assessing the same measure, which resulted in a four-factor model (Murphy & Hoover, 1999); however, most items were moderately to strongly correlated with each other (See Appendix D). There was a moderate-to-strong positive relationship between Component 1 and 2 (r = .696, p = .000), a strong negative relationship between Component 1 and 3 (r = -.783, p = .000), and a strong negative relationship between Component 2 and 3 (r = -.765, p = .000), which is consistent with previous research indicating strong associations between psychologically

aggressive items; however, the relationship is a complex one as factors did not load exactly as they have in previous studies. Overall, 72.7% of the items identified as depicting postural aggression loaded onto the first component, leaving five items to load on Component 2 and one item on Component 3.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to better understand the concept of postural aggression as it relates to a subtype of psychological aggression often utilized in intimate partner relationships but also misunderstood or combined with more generalized measures of emotional abuse, or sometimes excluded altogether. It was hypothesized that when comparing behaviors identified as "postural aggression," such as driving recklessly or breaking items in front of a partner to scare them, alongside other emotionally aggressive IPV behaviors that postural items would factor separately, potentially indicating the need for a new construct measure of psychological aggression. This hypothesis was partially confirmed in that almost three-fourths of the posturally aggressive items did identify as a single factor; however, they also paired with several items from both the "denigration" and "dominance/intimidation" subscale items of the MMEA. Of those postural items which did not factor onto Component 1, the results are interesting. It is understandable as to why two items, factoring on Component 2, most closely aligned with the "hostile withdrawal" subscale, which is characterized as a withholding of emotion or engagement from one's partner. The items "became so angry that they were unable or unwilling to talk" and "became angry enough to frighten you" were initially included as postural items as they may imply some physicality in the implementation of the behavior on behalf of the aggressive partner. It is possible that these items were not explicitly stated enough to imply this

gesture and are characterized more by an active withdrawal of affection, acknowledgement, and/or participation by the partner, which is more consistent with hostile withdrawal.

An additional item, "stomped out of the house during a disagreement" could also indicate a refusal to participate in the conflict rather than a physical act to provoke fear in a partner. Therefore, these loadings make sense. One postural aggression item loaded on Component 3, which otherwise consisted of only items from the "restrictive engulfment" subscale, indicating behaviors consistent with stalking of a partner, restriction of activities, or suspicion. Although it was originally included as a postural aggression item because of the physical action taken by the partner, it makes sense as to why the item "secretly searched through your belongings" loaded well with the other restrictive items as it does imply a suspicion of one's partner or mistrust more than inflicting fear.

One unexpected finding was that two additional items (one from the dominance/intimidation subscale and one from the added postural items) did not load with remaining posturally aggressive items. The following items, "put his/her face right in front of yours to make a point more forcefully" and "followed you into a room after a disagreement" loaded on Component 2 with mostly hostile withdrawal items, despite depicting clear physicality in each action. One possible explanation is that participants identified with more hostile aspects of these behaviors (i.e., high levels of emotionality or intensity) rather than a coercive or intimidating motive. In addition, all items from the "denigration" subscale loaded with most of the postural aggression items on Component 1. This finding was also unexpected as previous research has indicated that denigration (i.e., name calling, belittlement, etc.) often factors as its own component (Murphy & Hoover, 1999). It is possible that the items depicted in this scale, (e.g., "called you worthless" or "belittled you in front of others") were interpreted as a more of a

means of dominance or control over one's partner than previously expected, which may further complicate how individuals perceive psychological aggression as abusive behavior. It is also possible that postural aggression is not a distinct form of psychological aggression but rather a term that has been used in the literature synonymously with denigration, belittlement, or emotional abuse, which is deemed as equally or more damaging by victims of psychological abuse in partner relationships.

Considering that the factor analysis in this study did not determine postural aggression as a distinct construct of psychological aggression and factored well with other non-physical but direct forms of psychological abuse, it is possible that strictly examining the differences between particular behaviors may not be the most pertinent direction of IPV research. Rather, examining what these behaviors have in common and how they contribute to one's well-being, overall health, and depiction of IPV victimization may be a more effective means of examining this form of abuse while also developing a more meaningful explanation for the use of psychologically aggressive tactics in an intimate relationship. As psychological aggression towards a partner is thought to be the most common and most underreported form of IPV (Dokkedahl et al. 2019), it is important to better understand not only the types of psychological aggression being used but risk factors, precipitating events, and the relationship between psychological aggression and other, more lethal methods of IPV.

It is also important to note that while postural aggression may not have proved distinct from other forms of psychological aggression, psychological or emotional abuse are well documented as an identified separate construct of IPV, compared to physical and sexual victimization (Straus et al., 1996). It is well established that psychological aggression is occurring more frequently than physical violence in intimate partner relationships (Black et al.,

2011; Salis et al., 2014); however, psychological aggression is almost always present once physical abuse has occurred (Larsen, 2016; Williams et al., 2012). Other researchers have sought to establish a baseline for psychological aggression in a relationship in an effort to determine the most at-risk moment for physical violence (Salis, et al., 2014). Perhaps understanding psychological aggression as a precursor to physical abuse and better understanding at what level psychological aggression morphs into physical violence is a much more valuable endeavor in terms of better predicting acts of IPV and protecting those affected by it.

LIMITATIONS

While respondents did report having experienced a range of psychologically aggressive behaviors in either current or past intimate relationships, rates of experiencing such abuse were low. Overall, many individuals did not report high frequency of most behaviors, particularly the postural aggression items (M = 1.5), indicating rare to occasional exposure. In addition, this survey only investigated psychological aggression against female partners as only women were surveyed. Research suggests that men experience rates of psychological aggression and manipulation, and likely postural aggression, in intimate partner relationships at similar rates if not more often than women with nearly half of both men and women experiencing psychological aggression at some point in their lifetime (Black et al., 2011); therefore, it is a limitation of this study to not compare differences in victimization across sexes. A further limitation is that respondents were not asked about their socioeconomic status or income level. Since lifetime IPV prevalence has been shown to be higher for multi-racial, minority race, and lower income individuals (Breiding et al., 2008) and the fact that lack of resources were cited in the literature as a potential risk factor for IPV (Atkinson & Greenstein, 2005), it would be beneficial to analyze this information in the future to determine if rates of postural aggression victimization do

indeed differ across economic status as is suggested by previous research. On a related note, while the current sample reflects the population of the United States in some aspects, generalizability may be somewhat limited, as this is a relatively young, well-educated sample. Additionally, it may also be beneficial for future researchers to ask specifically about experience of IPV in both current and past relationships rather than an all-encompassing question asking about total IPV victimizations. This would help to gather information on individuals who may be currently involved in an abusive partnership. Finally, survey items depicting acts of physical aggression were not included in this study as the primary intention was to determine if postural aggression was significantly different than other forms of psychological aggression; however, including physically aggressive items may have improved clarity of item loadings, particularly those which produced small loadings (less than 0.3) onto multiple components.

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

It is evident that postural aggression exists in IPV perpetration and victimization; however, it may often be termed coercion, intimidation, or manipulation as means to evoke fear in a partner. Despite extensive research on partner violence over the last three decades and strides made to develop a more comprehensive understanding of why and how this form of aggression occurs (Chesworth, 2018), there remains a great deal of work to be done. Intimate partner violence continues to remain the most common form of violence committed against women globally, and the dynamics of this form of abuse only continue to evolve (WHO, 2019). Some estimates infer that up to 97% of women experience psychological aggression at least once in their lifetime (71% in this study), and this rate increases to nearly 100% when considering women who have also experienced physical abuse (Lawrence, 2009). Yet, there is still a need for conceptual clarity in what is considered emotional abuse. Perhaps it is because components, such

as postural aggression, are being described in many ways across the literature. While the purpose of this study was to highlight the differences between postural aggression and other forms of emotional abuse, it appears that many areas of postural aggression align well with Murphy and Hoover's (1999) original depiction of dominance and intimidation. More clarification is needed as to whether this component of psychological aggression is significantly different enough to stand on its own as a separate construct.

In addition to the need for continued conceptual and operational clarity of psychological aggression, it is imperative that as a field we better understand the causes and mitigators of all forms of partner violence due to the devastating effects that this form of abuse can have on an individual. Intimate partner violence has been linked to a range of health conditions such as chronic headaches, asthma, arthritis, stroke, cardiovascular disease, joint disease, and insomnia (Campbell, 2002; Chesworth, 2018) as well as increased risk for chronic health conditions due to over-activation in the neuroendocrine and immune systems as a result of stress (Miller & McCaw, 2019). Victims of IPV also experience an increased risk for PTSD, depression, anxiety, suicidality, and substance abuse. Despite these detrimental health consequences, many women continue to be misdiagnosed or untreated for IPV due to a lack of connectivity amongst physical symptoms as a result of long-term partner aggression. Women experiencing IPV are three times more likely to utilize health care resources; therefore, the argument that victims of IPV are invisible can no longer be utilized as almost every health care professional will treat a victim of IPV each year in his or her practice (Miller & McCaw, 2019). Because psychological aggression is the most common form of partner aggression but least likely to be reported (Cho et al., 2020), increased efforts to screen for non-physical acts of IPV may also increase visibility of such acts. Therefore, increased screening of partner aggression, including more covert forms such as

postural aggression, across all healthcare settings will likely both raise awareness of psychological aggression as well as provide victims with more objective treatment options to manage the effects of IPV.

While great efforts have been made to characterize perpetrators of IPV to identify those more likely to use aggression in intimate partnerships, focusing on typologies of perpetrators of abuse may be limited in utility. Since the origination of batterer intervention programs, much of the research used to support an understanding of IPV has come from a feminist theory that men perpetrate violence against women to ensure fear, control, and power over them to further perpetuate a society of patriarchy and acceptance of violence against women (Chesworth, 2018). While this theoretical explanation for why IPV continues to occur still holds true in many ways, perhaps it is more beneficial to think about IPV as a continuum of how and when behaviors occur rather than lumping them into categories of IPV that occur independently of one another and by particular perpetrators (Love et al., 2020). Continued clarification of IPV, comprehensive and inclusive models of perpetration, and visibility and discussion of intimate partner aggression will only further add to the development of a healthier and less violent society.

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APPENDIX A: APPROVAL LETTER

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY
www.marshall.edu

Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, WV 25755

FWA 00002704

IRB1 #00002205
IRB2 #00003206

May 10, 2019

Brittany Canady, Ph.D., ABPP
Psychology Department

RE: IRBNet ID# 1434107-1
At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Canady:

Protocol Title:	[1434107-1] THE USE OF POSTURAL AGGRESSION IN INTIMATE PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS: WHAT IS IT AND IS IT BEING RECOGNIZED AS "ABUSE" BY INTIMATE PARTNERS
Site Location:	MU
Submission Type:	New Project APPROVED
Review Type:	Exempt Review

In accordance with 45CFR46.104(d)(2), the above study was granted Exempted approval today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Chair/Designee. No further submission (or closure) is required for an Exempt study **unless** there is an amendment to the study. All amendments must be submitted and approved by the IRB Chair/Designee.

This study is for student Elizabeth G. Myers, M.S..

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Anna Robinson at (304) 696-2477 or robinsonn1@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Bruce F. Day, ThD, CIP
Director, Office of Research Integrity

APPENDIX B: AMENDMENT LETTER

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY
www.marshall.edu

Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, WV 25755

FWA 00002704

IRB1 #00002205
IRB2 #00003206

March 31, 2020

Brittany Canady, Ph.D., ABPP
Psychology Department

RE: IRBNet ID# 1434107-2
At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Canady:

Protocol Title:	[1434107-2] THE USE OF POSTURAL AGGRESSION IN INTIMATE PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS: WHAT IS IT AND IS IT BEING RECOGNIZED AS "ABUSE" BY INTIMATE PARTNERS
Site Location:	MU
Submission Type:	Amendment/Modification APPROVED
Review Type:	Exempt Review

The amendment to the above listed study was approved today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Chair. This amendment is a change in the survey demographic questions in order to be more inclusive. No further packages are required unless there is an additional change

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Anna Robinson at (304) 696-2477 or robinsonn1@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Bruce F. Day, ThD, CIP
Director, Office of Research Integrity

APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHICS OF STUDY SAMPLE

Variable	Total Sample	Percentage (%)
Age		
n	539	
18-24	66	12.2
25-34	256	41.8
35-44	121	22.4
45-54	52	9.9
55-64	33	6.1
65+	10	2.0
Race		
n	538	
American Indian/Alaska Native	2	0.4
Asian/Asian American	30	5.6
Bi-Racial/Multi-Racial	19	3.5
Black/African American	70	13.0
Middle Eastern Decent	1	0.2
Native American	45	8.4
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	2	0.4
White/European American	366	68.0
Other	3	0.6
Ethnicity		
n	533	
Hispanic or Latino/Latina	120	22.5
Not Hispanic or Latino/Latina	413	77.5
Sexual Orientation		
n	537	
Straight/Heterosexual	418	77.8
Gay	4	0.7
Lesbian	15	2.8
Bisexual	96	17.9
Queer	3	0.6
Questioning	1	0.2
Education		
n	536	
High School Diploma	26	4.9
Some College (but no degree)	61	11.4
Associate's Degree	48	9.0
Bachelor's Degree	304	56.7
Master's Degree	92	17.2

Doctoral or Professional Degree	5	0.9
Geographical Location		
N = 532		
Rural Area	109	20.2
Suburban Area	205	38.0
Urban Area	216	40.1
Relationship Status		
n	539	
Single	43	8.0
Casual Dating Relationship(s)	49	9.1
Serious Dating Relationship	69	12.8
Cohabitating	45	8.3
Engaged	7	1.3
Married	307	57.0
Separated	4	0.7
Divorced	11	2.0
Widowed	4	0.7
# of Romantic Relationships		
n	529	
0	5	0.9
1-3	312	59.0
4-7	155	29.2
8-10	40	7.6
11-20	12	2.3
21+	5	1.0
# of IPV Victimizations		
n	531	
0	155	29.2
1	204	38.4
2-5	138	26.0
6-10	21	3.9
11-20	8	1.6
21+	5	1.0
Barrier to Care		
n	536	
YES	225	42.0
NO	264	49.3
UNSURE	47	8.8

APPENDIX D: PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL MEASURE OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE + POSTURAL ITEMS (COMMUNALITIES EXTRACTION)

Items	Extraction
Factor 1: Intimidation/Belittlement	
Made a "slit your throat" motion across his/her throat to imply harm*	.782
Intentionally left a firearm or other weapon somewhere meant to be found by you after a disagreement*	.761
Locked you in the bedroom*	.774
Left you somewhere with no way to get home*	.779
Called you ugly	.768
Started to hit you but stopped*	.792
Destroyed something belonging to you*	.769
Broke or destroyed something important to you*	.766
Shook a fist at you*	.789
Threatened to throw something at you*	.777
Threatened to hit you*	.799
Called you a loser, failure, or similar term	.744
Drove recklessly to frighten you*	.713
Criticized your appearance	.719
Shook a finger at you*	.723
Called you worthless	.736
Said someone else would be a better partner	.758
Hit or kicked a wall, door, or furniture in front of you*	.759

Items continued...	Extraction
Belittled you in front of other people	.730
Threw, smashed, hit, or kicked something in front of you*	.740
Made threatening gestures or faces at you*	.755
Stood or hovered over you during a conflict or disagreement*	.780
Factor 2: Affection Withholding	
Refused to acknowledge a problem that you felt was important	.777
Sulked or refused to talk about an issue	.762
Refused to have any discussion of a problem	.773
Intentionally avoided you during a conflict or disagreement	.743
Changed the subject on purpose when you were trying to discuss a problem	.752
Acted cold or distant when angry	.674
Became so angry they were unable or unwilling to talk*	.745
Stomped out of the house or yard during disagreement*	.718
Became angry enough to frighten you*	.765
Followed you into a room after a disagreement*	.683
Put his/her face in front of your face to make a point more forcefully*	.735
Factor 3: Stalking/Control/Guilt	
Asked you who you had been with in a suspicious manner	.769
Asked you where you had been in a suspicious manner	.817
Tried to make you feel guilty for not spending time together	.750
Got angry because you went somewhere without telling him/her	.801
Complained that you spend too much time with friends	.783

Items continued...	Extraction
Tried to stop you from seeing certain friends or family members	.758
Checked up on you by asking friends or relatives where you were or who you were with	.780
Secretly searched through your belongings*	.704

* denotes items previously identified as postural aggression

APPENDIX E: PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL MEASURE OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE + POSTURAL ITEMS (PATTERN COEFFICIENTS)

Items	Factor Loading		
	1	2	3
Factor 1: Intimidation/Belittlement			
Made a "slit your throat" motion across his/her throat to imply harm*	**1.05**		
Intentionally left a firearm or other weapon somewhere meant to be found by you after a disagreement*	**.95**		
Locked you in the bedroom*	**.94**		
Left you somewhere with no way to get home*	**.92**		
Called you ugly	**.83**		
Started to hit you but stopped*	**.82**		
Destroyed something belonging to you*	**.81**		
Broke or destroyed something important to you*	**.80**		
Shook a fist at you*	**.78**		
Threatened to throw something at you*	**.73**		
Threatened to hit you*	**.71**		
Called you a loser, failure, or similar term	**.67**		
Drove recklessly to frighten you*	**.63**		
Criticized your appearance	**.63**		
Shook a finger at you*	**.63**		
Called you worthless	**.61**		
Said someone else would be a better partner	**.59**		

Items continued...	Factor Loading		
	1	2	3
Hit or kicked a wall, door, or furniture in front of you*	**.57**		
Belittled you in front of other people	**.57**		
Threw, smashed, hit, or kicked something in front of you*	**.52**		
Made threatening gestures or faces at you*	**.52**		
Stood or hovered over you during a conflict or disagreement*	**.38**	.33	
Factor 2: Affection Withholding			
Refused to acknowledge a problem that you felt was important		**.86**	
Sulked or refused to talk about an issue		**.85**	
Refused to have any discussion of a problem		**.83**	
Intentionally avoided you during a conflict or disagreement		**.82**	
Changed the subject on purpose when you were trying to discuss a problem		**.79**	
Acted cold or distant when angry		**.72**	
Became so angry they were unable or unwilling to talk*		**.62**	
Stomped out of the house or yard during disagreement*	.44	**.45**	
Became angry enough to frighten you*		**.45**	-.30
Followed you into a room after a disagreement*	.31	**.37**	
Put his/her face in front of your face to make a point more forcefully*		**.36**	-.30
Factor 3: Stalking/Control/Guilt			
Asked you who you had been with in a suspicious manner			**-.93**
Asked you where you had been in a suspicious manner			**-.92**

Items continued...	Factor Loading		
	1	2	3
Tried to make you feel guilty for not spending time together			**-.81**
Got angry because you went somewhere without telling him/her			**-.81**
Complained that you spend too much time with friends			**-.80**
Tried to stop you from seeing certain friends or family members			**-.78**
Checked up on you by asking friends or relatives where you were or who you were with	.32		**-.69**
Secretly searched through your belongings*			**-.57**

* denotes items previously identified as postural aggression

APPENDIX F: PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL MEASURE OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE + POSTURAL ITEMS (STRUCTURE COEFFICIENTS)

Items	Factor Loading		
	1	2	3
Factor 1: Intimidation/Belittlement			
Made a "slit your throat" motion across his/her throat to imply harm*	.87	.51	-.61
Intentionally left a firearm or other weapon somewhere meant to be found by you after a disagreement*	.87	.56	-.65
Locked you in the bedroom*	.88	.55	-.67
Left you somewhere with no way to get home*	.88	.60	-.67
Called you ugly	.87	.66	-.69
Started to hit you but stopped*	.89	.63	-.73
Destroyed something belonging to you*	.88	.64	-.71
Broke or destroyed something important to you*	.87	.66	-.71
Shook a fist at you*	.89	.65	-.74
Threatened to throw something at you*	.87	.65	-.76
Threatened to hit you*	.88	.68	-.77
Called you a loser, failure, or similar term	.84	.72	-.71
Drove recklessly to frighten you*	.83	.67	-.73
Criticized your appearance	.83	.71	-.72
Shook a finger at you*	.83	.70	-.73
Called you worthless	.84	.71	-.74
Said someone else would be a better partner	.85	.72	-.77

Items continued...	Factor Loading		
	1	2	3
Hit or kicked a wall, door, or furniture in front of you*	.85	.72	-.77
Belittled you in front of other people	.83	.72	-.75
Threw, smashed, hit, or kicked something in front of you*	.82	.74	-.77
Made threatening gestures or faces at you*	.83	.73	-.79
Stood or hovered over you during a conflict or disagreement*	.81	.79	-.81
Factor 2: Affection Withholding			
Refused to acknowledge a problem that you felt was important	.61	.88	-.69
Sulked or refused to talk about an issue	.62	.87	-.68
Refused to have any discussion of a problem	.62	.88	-.70
Intentionally avoided you during a conflict or disagreement	.65	.86	-.67
Changed the subject on purpose when you were trying to discuss a problem	.66	.86	-.68
Acted cold or distant when angry	.58	.82	-.68
Became so angry they were unable or unwilling to talk*	.73	.84	-.73
Stomped out of the house or yard during disagreement*	.779	.782	-.72
Became angry enough to frighten you*	.75	.82	-.81
Followed you into a room after a disagreement*	.75	.76	-.75
Put his/her face in front of your face to make a point more forcefully*	.76	.79	-.80
Factor 3: Stalking/Control/Guilt			
Asked you who you had been with in a suspicious manner	.66	.66	-.88
Asked you where you had been in a suspicious manner	.71	.67	-.90

Items continued...	Factor Loading		
	1	2	3
Tried to make you feel guilty for not spending time together	.68	.70	-.86
Got angry because you went somewhere without telling him/her	.73	.71	-.89
Complained that you spend too much time with friends	.73	.69	-.88
Tried to stop you from seeing certain friends or family members	.68	.72	-.87
Checked up on you by asking friends or relatives where you were or who you were with	.79	.64	-.86
Secretly searched through your belongings*	.74	.69	-.82

* denotes items previously identified as postural aggression

APPENDIX G: POSTURAL AGGRESSION ITEM LOADINGS ON PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS ANALYSIS

Items	Factor Loading		
	1	2	3
Secretly Searched Through Your Belongings			**-.57**
Became Angry Enough to Frighten You		**.45**	-.30
Became So Angry They Were Unable or Unwilling to Talk		**.62**	
Put His/Her Face Right in Front of Your Face to Make a Point More Forcefully		**.36**	-.30
Threatened to Hit You	**.71**		
Threatened to Throw Something at You	**.76**		
Threw, Smashed, Hit, or Kicked Something in Front of You	**.52**		
Drove Recklessly to Frighten You	**.63**		
Stood or Hovered Over You During a Conflict or Disagreement	**.38**		
Locked You in the Bedroom	**.94**		
Broke or Destroyed Something Important to You	**.80**		
Left You Somewhere with No Way to Get Home	**.92**		
Stomped Out of the House or Yard During a Disagreement	.44	**.45**	
Destroyed Something Belonging to You	**.81**		
Started to Hit You but Stopped	**.82**		
Hit or Kicked a Wall, Door, or Furniture in Front of You	**.57**		
Shook a Finger at You	**.63**		
Made Threatening Gestures or Faces at You	**.52**		

Items continued...	Factor Loading		
	1	2	3
Shook a Fist at You	**.78**		
Followed You into a Room After a Disagreement	.31	**.37**	
Intentionally Left a Firearm or Other Weapon Somewhere Meant to Be Found by You After a Disagreement	**.95**		
Made a "Slit Your Throat" Motion Across His/Her Throat to Imply Harm	**1.05**		

APPENDIX H: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following demographic questions.

1. What is your age? _____

2. What is your race?
   - American Indian or Alaska Native
   - Asian or Asian American
   - Bi-Racial or Multi-Racial
   - Black or African American
   - Middle Eastern Descent
   - Native American
   - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   - White or European American
   - Other (Please Specify): _____

3. What is your ethnicity?
   - Hispanic or Latino/Latina
   - Not Hispanic or Latino/Latina

4. What is your sex?
   - Female
   - Male
   - Intersex

5. Which of the following best describes your gender identify?
   - Man
   - Woman
   - Transgender (Male to Female)
   - Transgender (Female to Male)
   - Other (Please Specify): _____
   - Prefer Not to Say

6. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?
   - Straight/Heterosexual
   - Gay
   - Lesbian
   - Bisexual
   - Queer
   - Questioning
   - Other (Please Specify): _____
   - Prefer Not to Say

7. How many romantic relationships have you been in? _____

8. How many times have you been a victim of violence or aggression by an intimate partner? _____

9. Have you ever experienced a barrier to accessing care or resources due to violence in your intimate relationship?
- YES
- NO
- UNSURE

10. What is your current relationship status?
- Single
- Casual Dating Relationship(s)
- Serious Dating Relationship
- Cohabiting
- Engaged
- Married
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widowed

11. What is your highest level of education achieved?
- Less than high school diploma
- High school diploma
- Some college (but no degree)
- Associates Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral or Professional Degree

12. What is your current geographical location?
- Rural Area
- Suburban Area
- Urban Area
- Other (Please Specify): _____

13. Please list your 5-digit zip code: _____

APPENDIX I: MULTIDIMENSIONAL MEASURE OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE (MURPHY & HOOVER, 1999)

The following questions ask about the relationship with your partner or ex-partner. Please report how often each of these things has happened in the last six months. Please choose a number using the scale below to indicate how often your partner has done each of the following things.

* indicates items identified as "postural aggression"

0 = Never 1 = Rarely 2 = Occasionally 3 = Frequently 4 = Very Frequently

_____ 1. Asked you where you had been in suspicious manner.

_____ 2. Asked you who you had been with in a suspicious manner.

_____ 3. Secretly searched through your belongings. *

_____ 4. Tried to stop you from seeing certain friends or family members.

_____ 5. Complained that you spend too much time with friends.

_____ 6. Got angry because you went somewhere without telling him/her.

_____ 7. Tried to make you feel guilty for not spending enough time together.

_____ 8. Checked up on you by asking friends or relatives where you were or who you were with.

_____ 9. Called you worthless.

_____ 10. Called you ugly.

_____ 11. Criticized your appearance.

_____ 12. Called you a loser, failure, or similar term.

_____ 13. Belittled you in front of other people.

_____ 14. Said that someone else would be a better partner (better spouse, better girlfriend or boyfriend).

_____ 15. Became so angry that they were unable or unwilling to talk. *

_____ 16. Acted cold or distant when angry.

_____ 17. Refused to have any discussion of a problem.

_____ 18. Changed the subject on purpose when you were trying to discuss a problem.

_____ 19. Refused to acknowledge a problem that you felt was important.

_____ 20. Sulked or refused to talk about an issue.

_____ 21. Intentionally avoided you during a conflict or disagreement.

_____ 22. Became angry enough to frighten you. *

_____ 23. Put his/her face right in front of your face to make a point more forcefully. *

_____ 24. Threatened to hit you. *

_____ 25. Threatened to throw something at you. *

_____ 26. Threw, smashed, hit, or kicked something in front of you. *

_____ 27. Drove recklessly to frighten you. *

_____ 28. Stood or hovered over you during a conflict or disagreement. *

APPENDIX J: ADDITIONAL POSTURAL AGGRESSION ITEMS

The following questions ask about the relationship with your partner or ex-partner. Please report how often each of these things has happened in the last six months. Please choose a number using the scale below to indicate how often your partner has done each of the following things.

0 = Never 1 = Rarely 2 = Occasionally 3 = Frequently 4 = Very Frequently

_____ 29. Locked you in the bedroom.

_____ 30. Broke or destroyed something important to you.

_____ 31. Left you somewhere with no way to get home.

_____ 32. Stomped out of the house or yard during a disagreement.

_____ 33. Destroyed something belonging to you.

_____ 34. Started to hit you but stopped.

_____ 35. Hit or kicked a wall, door, or furniture in front of you.

_____ 36. Shook a finger at you.

_____ 37. Made threatening gestures or faces at you.

_____ 38. Shook a fist at you.

_____ 39. Followed you into a room after a disagreement.

_____ 40. Intentionally left a firearm or other weapon somewhere meant to be found by you after a disagreement.

_____ 41. Made a "slit your throat" motion across his/her throat to imply harm.

APPENDIX K: COMPLETE LIST OF POSTURAL AGGRESSION ITEMS

1. Secretly searched through your belongings.
2. Became so angry that they were unable or unwilling to talk.
3. Became angry enough to frighten you.
4. Put his/her face right in front of your face to make a point more forcefully.
5. Threatened to hit you.
6. Threatened to throw something at you.
7. Threw, smashed, hit, or kicked something in front of you.
8. Drove recklessly to frighten you.
9. Stood or hovered over you during a conflict or disagreement.
10. Locked you in the bedroom.
11. Broke or destroyed something important to you.
12. Left you somewhere with no way to get home.
13. Stomped out of the house or yard during a disagreement.
14. Destroyed something belonging to you.
15. Started to hit you but stopped.
16. Hit or kicked a wall, door, or furniture in front of you.
17. Shook a finger at you.
18. Made threatening gestures or faces at you.
19. Shook a fist at you.
20. Followed you into a room after a disagreement.
21. Intentionally left a firearm or other weapon somewhere meant to be found by you after a disagreement.

22. Made a “slit your throat” motion across his/her throat to imply harm.